



I Am She



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# I Am She

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## Introduction

**Boldness** is a call to action. As Women of the ELCA, women who are claimed and called by God, we believe that a life lived **boldly** is a faith-filled celebration and an investment in the world we want for ourselves and our children.

Women of the ELCA are called “to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.” Boldness comes in many forms; its basis, in whatever form, is right action by an individual or group. Some boldness is bright and loud. Some is firm and quiet. Women of the ELCA celebrates this range of voices, knowing that the avenues for bold self-expression are limitless.

Do you know what is your best bold? This resource is designed to help you discover your boldest bold, and discover ways to put it into action.

Women today stand at a particular point where the bold women of yesterday and the bold women of tomorrow can meet. We are the ones whom we have been waiting for: The call to act boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ is a present call. This resource will inspire us, encourage bold action, befriend our fears, and design the future as we would have it according to our faith.

*Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant. . . . Since then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness.*

2 Corinthians 3:4–6a,12

Will you boldly claim your boldness today, declaring, “I am she!”? We hope this resource becomes the catalyst for you to act boldly in the present, and more so into the future, on your faith in Christ Jesus. You are she!

*There is no more liberating, no more exhilarating experience than to determine one’s position, state it bravely, and then to act boldly.*

Eleanor Roosevelt



## How to Use This Resource

This program may be used in a congregational setting, as a conference event, or as part of a synodical women's convention. It could be conducted over five to six weeks or as a weekend retreat. The format is flexible to accommodate the size of your group.

Each participant will need her own copy of this resource to write in and reflect upon. For smaller groups, do each of the sessions together. For larger groups, break into smaller groups by your dominant bold type. Have different facilitators lead the groups through the "ACT" sessions: "Boldness in Advocacy," "Boldness in Caring," and "Boldness in Teaching." Allow the facilitators to decide how to run each session in the allotted time.

As you plan, remember that the purpose of this resource is for each participant:

- to gain understanding of her own gifts and bold purpose,
- to learn from other bold examples,
- to develop a plan to live out her bold, and
- to share in community and celebrate the boldness of each individual.

### Tailoring your event

These are suggestions and can be modified as necessary to be helpful to your group.

Spend one session talking about prayer (pages 6–8). Allow 30 minutes to one hour. Build a common understanding of prayer as bold action that we all are invited to partake in, acknowledging that for some it takes practice. This session should focus on the idea that all baptized Christians can be bold in prayer and because of prayer. Discuss what the scripture texts on prayer say about what prayer is and who it is for.

Allow individuals plenty of time to take account of their resources (page 9) and spend time with the "I Am She Who Prays" chart (page 10). This chart is an important element throughout different sections of the program, so allow 30 minutes to one hour as needed.

For the "ACT" sections, spend at least one hour on each: Advocacy (pages 11–13), Caring (pages 14–16), and Teaching (pages 17–20). Each facilitator may want to bring in additional examples of the biblical, historical, and current bold women listed in each section.

Finally, spend up to another hour creating personal mission statements (pages 21–22), or allow women to do this work at home and come back prepared to share their stories and work.

End by commissioning each other with the "I Am She" sending service (pages 23–25). This service is designed to take place within this program but may also be used for commissioning your women's organization's leaders or in your regular worship. If you use it with a Service of Holy Communion, following the song after the sermon, add the prayers of the people, an offering, and the communion liturgy. Follow communion with the commissioning.

Ideally, after participating in this program, women will have a way to hold one another accountable, check in with each other, and see how they are living out their bold. They will support one another and challenge one another to live out their statements.

## Bold in Prayer

**Prayer is much more than words.** It is an expression of the heart toward God. It is an experience, a relationship, not an activity.

As a child of God you are invited to come boldly before God’s throne. “Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” Paul writes, “let us . . . then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Every baptized Christian has boldness in prayer! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes it possible for each of us to have access to God. Have you utilized your boldness in prayer? Just say the word: Talk to God, tell God your joys and concerns, give God thanks and praise, confess your sins and your needs before God in prayer. It is both that simple and that difficult.

Prayer is a dialogue between two people who love each other—God and a person. Simply put, prayer is communicating with God. Every Christian can directly contact God at all times. But many of us tend to forget such a direct line exists or rarely connect until an emergency arises.

In accordance with the eternal purpose that God has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in who we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him. (Ephesians 3:11–12)

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 4:2)

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we have access in one Spirit to God. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:17–19)

The prayer of the righteous is effective and powerful. (James 5:16b)

Therefore since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to grace in which we stand. (Romans 5:1–2)



## Praying Boldly

**For some of us, praying is second nature**, while for some, praying out loud is a bold step.

If you're not used to praying as bold action, you may feel uncertain—or maybe even silly—about trying it. Trying new things is good. And praying with boldness is what we are called to do. It will change the world, and us.

Here is a list of ways you might pray boldly. Try doing a different prayer idea every day for a week, or try one new bold idea a week for 7 weeks.

1. Invite a group of friends to pray with you (ask them to hold hands while you pray).
2. Pray for something that you think is completely impossible. Journal about it and record what happens.
3. Prayer-walk your neighborhood. As you walk, look around at the houses you see and the people you pass. Pray for the people in your neighborhood. Prayer-walking is a great exercise all around—you get out and active, and your spirit gets moving boldly.
4. Try praying aloud in a big group setting, like your women's Bible study group or in church.
5. Try a new prayer posture. If you usually sit when praying, try kneeling. If you usually kneel, try standing and raising your hands.

6. Pray over a meal out—at school, work, or in a restaurant. Don't worry if others watch you; they may want to join you sometime.
7. Share a song, a story, or a joke with God as you pray. Or draw a prayer for God and color it beautifully!

Based on an idea from Jane Cline Rubicini, Kitchener, Ontario (2000)

So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive God's mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it.

Hebrews 4:16

*(New Living Bible)*



## Prayers As You Begin

Choose one or more of the prayers below, or construct your own:

**Leader:** May the strength of God pilot us,  
May the power of God preserve us,  
May the wisdom of God instruct us,  
May the hand of God protect us,  
May the way of God direct us,  
May the shield of God defend us,  
May the host of God guard us against the  
    snares of evil and the temptations of the  
    world. Amen.  
*(attributed to St. Patrick)*

**All:** Gracious God, by your Spirit empower us.  
Give us courage, grant us wholeness, and  
fill us with love. Help us to live with the  
certainty that we are better off together  
than we are separated, from you or from  
each other. Because we have you, nothing  
can shake our confidence in this world or  
the next. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

**Leader:** Loving God, thank you for creating us to be  
bold, and let your light shine in all we say  
and do.

**All:** Let the light so shine!

**Leader:** God of life and wholeness, keep us ever  
vigilant to your presence and empower us  
by your Spirit.

**All:** Let the light so shine!

**Leader:** Open our hearts and minds to all the gifts  
you have given.

**All:** Let the light so shine!

**Leader:** Let the warmth of your care challenge us to  
become what you have called us to be.

**All:** Let the light so shine!

*(Sing "Shine, Jesus, Shine" together.)*



# Finding Your Bold in Community

Make a list of the following resources:

**My Talents**

**My Finances**

**My Education and Training**

**My Hobbies and Skills**

**My Friends and Family**

**Now, circle the resources that you think are your “top” ones in each category.** You may have more in some areas than others.

Using the chart on the next page, place your initials in the squares that illustrate the resources above.

The chart on the next page will help you determine the categories of BOLD you define yourself as fitting into. It will also help you meet others who have similar interests and learn from those who have different bold ways.

# I AM SHE WHO PRAYS

## Finding Your Bold in Community



Act boldly.

I AM SHE WHO HAS AN UNUSUAL SENSE OF KINDNESS TOWARD ALL CREATED THINGS	I AM SHE WHO WORKS IN A SOUP KITCHEN, PRISON, OR HOSPITAL	I AM SHE WHO CARES	I AM SHE WHO TEACHES OTHERS WHAT I KNOW
I AM SHE WHO GROUNDS HERSELF IN GOD'S WORD THROUGH STUDY AND MEDITATION	I AM SHE WHO GIVES MY TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE	I AM SHE WHO LEADS OTHERS	I AM SHE WHO WORKS FOR THE BIG PICTURE THAT IS FILLED WITH HOPE
I AM SHE WHO IS CONSCIOUS OF THE COMMUNITY AROUND HER	I AM SHE WHO OBSERVES THINGS AROUND ME AND SEES GOD AT WORK	I AM SHE WHO IS NOT AFRAID OF CONFRONTATION	I AM SHE WHO SERVES OTHERS
I AM SHE WHO KNOWS HOW TO GRACIOUSLY RECEIVE AS WELL AS GIVE	I AM SHE WHO HAS A PASSION FOR JUSTICE	I AM SHE WHO LEARNS AND GROWS	I AM SHE WHO SPEAKS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO VOICE
I AM SHE WHO SHARES THE GOSPEL IN WORD & DEED	I AM SHE WHO IS A GOOD STEWARD OF GOD'S CREATION AND GIFTS	I AM SHE WHO TAKES CARE OF HERSELF	I AM SHE WHO DISCOVERS THINGS ABOUT HERSELF AND OTHERS THROUGHOUT LIFE

## Boldness in Advocacy

*The proclamation of the gospel in a secular world, growth in Christian discipleship, and the development of church teaching and life require cultivating the virtue of boldness.*

Dr. Daniel Dombrowski, Department of Philosophy at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, in *Spirituality Today* magazine, Fall 1985 (vol. 37)



**Bold know-how and action can be learned!** Just as we practice the piano or a part for a play, or just as we exercise our bodies to become stronger, regular practice in boldness gives us the strength to speak when we feel hindered or the right steps to take when we would like to hold back. We can not only learn to be bold but also to speak and act in ways that offer a contrast to the noise of the “godless chatter” that occurs in word and deed around us.

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed.*

1 Peter 1:13

*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but by encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:24–25

*So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.*

Galatians 6:9–10

These passages remind us that as women of faith, we are called to bold action. They illustrate that boldness takes practice to find its right rhythm in each of us, to develop its full strength and potential. Bold action and advocacy may take different forms, but it all serves the purpose of contributing to the benefit of the whole (community, world, family, etc.).

**Bold advocacy is . . .**

**Do you consider yourself BOLD in advocacy?  
Why or why not?**

## A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

UNNAMED WISE WOMAN: *I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel; why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?*

2 Samuel 20:15–22

This wise woman from the city of Abel was left unnamed, but her story was included in Scripture because her bold action saved her community. She negotiated with Joab, a general in David's army, advocating a plan to save her city from destruction. She successfully persuaded the general to seek another way to get the result he wanted. As a godly woman, she put her trust in her personal virtues of peace and faithfulness. She wisely foresaw the importance of the community to the whole people and heritage of Israel, and she shrewdly contended that her city could offer more to the greater good were it not destroyed.

This wise woman recognized the benefit and tactics of being an advocate. She knew that large-scale violence would likely beget more violence and understood the grand picture and future of her community, what loss there would be if the walls were brought down. An advocate's work takes a long-term approach to an immediate problem. In the case of this wise woman, she not only saved her town but realigned the alliances that helped King David, psalmist and Jesus' ancestor, remain in power.

**What did the woman want?**

**Consider a time when you spoke up for the sake of your family, community, or world. What happened? Was it intimidating? If so, why?**

*What got you through the occasion?*

*If you have never spoken up, why not? What hinders you?*

How do we illustrate our peace and faithfulness when our communities are threatened? Can we offer collective wise solutions that avoid long-term violence and destruction? Do we think of the big picture and include those who have no voice in the present and those in the distant future? As faithful women, we are called to love and care for our communities by strengthening social safety nets and building trust and dependent alliances for current and future generations.

**How does your faith help you to advocate on behalf of your community or those in need?**

**A HISTORICAL EXAMPLE**

*The strongest reason why we ask for a woman to have a voice in the government under which she lives; in the religion she is asked to believe; equality in social life, where she is the chief factor; a place in the trades and professions, where she may earn her bread; is because of her birthright to self-sovereignty; because, as an individual, she must rely on herself.*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, President of the National Woman Suffrage Association, 1869–1880

Elizabeth Stanton led the fight for a woman’s right to vote, and as a woman of faith she boldly advocated for stronger and more positive images of women biblical figures and composed *The Woman’s Bible*, a written commentary challenging the negative stereotypes of women in the Bible. For a woman of her time, this was extraordinarily progressive. She was an advocate for all women, whom she believed deserved a voice in their religion, their government, and their society as a whole.

**When have you stood up and asked to be heard? Was it at a church or a local government meeting?**

**When you asked, were you asking for yourself and/or for others?**

**Have you advocated for an underserved group in your community who needed a voice to represent them? For what were you advocating?**

**A CURRENT EXAMPLE**

*When I fight about what is going on in the neighborhood, or when I fight about what is happening to other people’s children, I’m doing that because I want to leave a community and a world that is better than the one I found.*

Marian Wright Edelman

Marian Wright Edelman was the first African-American woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar. During the Civil Rights movement, she established the course of her career by directing the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Office and later serving as counsel for Martin Luther King Jr.’s Poor People’s March. Edelman then founded the Washington Research Project, which would become the Children’s Defense Fund. The Children’s Defense Fund sponsors the annual Children’s Sabbath as well as lobbies Congress and works for the benefit of children everywhere.

**Consider and respond to Edelman’s comment above. How do you leave the community and world better than you found it? How can you?**

**Marian Edelman’s focus is children. What is your specific passion for leaving the world better than you found it?**

**In all ways of bold advocating, which way is most like you? (see chart, page 10)**

## Boldness in Caring



### **Caring as exemplified through sacrifice**

*Through Jesus, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

Hebrews 13:15–16

### **Caring as demonstrated in acts of kindness**

*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

Ephesians 4:32

### **Caring as embodied in stewardship**

*You shall go there, bringing there your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your households together, rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.*

Deuteronomy 12:6–7

God has given us so much—life, forgiveness, care of the earth, and possessions. How can we respond to God's grace? We can do so through boldly caring for others. Caring can be viewed through various lenses. In this resource, we define caring in many ways, including acts of sacrifice, kindness, and financial stewardship. These all demonstrate our call to, and enormous capacity for, caring for others in our community of faith.

**Bold caring is . . .**

**Do you consider yourself BOLD in caring?  
Why or why not?**

### A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

UNNAMED WOMAN: *She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. She is like the ships of the merchant, she brings her food from far away. She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy.*

Proverbs 31:13–14, 16–18, 20

Here we read again about an unnamed godly woman. This woman is smart, strong, dependable, and caring. This passage in Proverbs praises the work of a woman, the many facets in which she lives: as planter, merchant, provider, caregiver, etc. There are so many ways in which we give of ourselves as women, physically and emotionally.

**How many different caring roles do you fill?**

**Are there times when it has been difficult to find the strength to balance those roles?**

**When it is difficult to find that strength, whom do you allow to care for you?**

### A HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

Susan LaFlesche Picotte, born on the Omaha reservation in northeastern Nebraska in 1865, was the first Native American woman in the United States to receive a medical degree. She later became a physician for the Omaha Tribe. Before her time, the medical caregivers in her tribe had only been men, and she boldly risked rejection by her own people in order to gain her education. Furthermore, she then took advantage of her education in order to advance the health of her tribe, spending her life tending to their wellbeing.

**When have you cared for a loved one?**

**When has someone shown kindness to you when you least expected it?**

**Has someone ever doubted your capacity to care for them?**

**When have you sacrificed your own comfort in order to help another? When has someone done that for you?**

### **A CURRENT EXAMPLE**

Esther Arne served on the first Women of the ELCA churchwide executive board. Desiring to support ELCA women advancing to the top of their discipline, she single-handedly established a scholarship fund in 1998 to support women reaching the top of their field as an administrator. Since then, more than \$10,000 has been given in scholarships through her Arne Administrative Leadership Scholarship Fund.

**Do you see yourself as a good steward?**

**The term “stewardship” is often applied in financial matters, which is essential. But in what other ways can we be important stewards?**

**In all ways of bold caring, which way is most like you? (see chart, page 10)**

**How can we encourage others to aspire to be good stewards?**

## Boldness in Teaching



### Teaching can be seen through the lens of witnessing

*Soon afterwards [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene... and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.*

Luke 8:1–3

In these passages we read of boldness in the women who traveled to witness to their faith and in Jesus, who welcomed women so openly into discipleship. Deborah, the bold prophet, judge, and preacher, was given the power to teach others. Through her role as both weaver and faithful believer, Lydia boldly mentored others, teaching them of her own baptism and opening her home for ministry to others. These are manifestations of boldness in teaching we find and exhibit.

**Bold teaching is . . .**

### Teaching can be heard in the form of preaching

*At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Raman and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.*

Judges 4:4–5

### Teaching can be modeled through the act of mentoring

*On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatire and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.*

Acts 16:13–15

**Do you consider yourself BOLD in teaching? Why or why not?**

## A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

*And Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."*

Mark 16:15

Are we not commanded, both male and female, to preach the gospel? There are many examples of women prophets in the Bible, women who told of the good news, women who served as deacons in the church.

## Phoebe

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.*

Romans 16:1

Phoebe is one example of a woman deacon in the Bible, praised and highly regarded by Paul, who encouraged others to listen to her and assist her.

## Huldah

*So the priest Hilkiyah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah ... she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read."*

2 Kings 22:14–16

Huldah is designated a prophetess in the Bible. Priests came to her for consultation and her message was taken back to the people, which ultimately inspired a national revival.

**How many biblical women can you name who can be regarded as bold teachers of the Gospel?**

**It was women in the Bible who first learned of Jesus' resurrection and witnessed that to the people. How have you witnessed to your faith?**

**If you are ordained, what important experiences as a preacher can you share?**

**A HISTORICAL EXAMPLE**

*Huge crowds of curious spectators had gathered at camp meetings to hear them preach. Angry clergymen had locked them out of meetinghouses. . . . Conservative critics had accused them of being jezebels or prostitutes . . . but converts had swooned at their feet.*

*Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America,*  
Catherine A. Brekus, UNC Press, 1998, p. 5

Sojourner Truth was a rebel, an evangelist, a teacher of faith. Her sermons were heard by small and large crowds, if not in a church, then in the fields. A former slave, Sojourner Truth traveled around the country to preach and was actually accused at one point of being a man because of her booming preacher’s voice. A fierce believer in women’s potential as religious leaders, Sojourner Truth represented a group of early bold female evangelists who preached at their own peril and were both loved and despised during their lifetime.

**Have you ever been told your voice was too loud or too opinionated?**

**When have you felt inspired by the teaching of another?**

**When do you think you inspired someone else because of your instruction?**

**When has your teaching offended another? Why do you think it caused that reaction?**

**Have you ever felt you were being held to a different standard?**

**A CURRENT EXAMPLE**

Reverend Elizabeth Alvina Platz was the first woman to be ordained in the Lutheran church in North America on November 22, 1970. In 1991, the percentage of ordained women in the ELCA stood at 8%. In 2007, that number increased to 20%. Today, women make up at least 50% of our ELCA seminary student populations. We continue to encourage women to boldly accept their call as deserving teachers of the Gospel.

**Do you remember the first time you heard a woman preach?**

**Have you ever considered ordination yourself or encouraged another woman to accept that call?**

**Consider all the ways that you share the word of God and the good news (in word and deed).**

**What does it mean to your spiritual life when you hear the Gospel spoken and interpreted by a woman?**

**In all ways of bold teaching, which way is most like you? (see chart, page 10)**

## Your Bold Identification

After you have worked through each of the sections of discovering various BOLD capacities, please reflect on the following:

**How do you exemplify boldness in advocacy?**

*There is a sweep of grace that moves holy women from believing, to voicing, to doing, to being. . . . They didn't just believe in the possibility of personal revelation, they experienced it, powerfully and unforgettably. I got a sense of what it would be like to experience God directly and know that God had chosen me for a special purpose.*

Helen LaKelly Hunt

**How do you exemplify boldness in caring?**

### **Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Purpose Statement**

As a community of women,  
created in the image of God,  
called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and  
empowered by the Holy Spirit,  
we commit ourselves to  
grow in faith,  
affirm our gifts,  
support one another in our callings,  
engage in ministry and action, and  
promote healing and wholeness  
in the church,  
the society, and  
the world.

**How do you exemplify boldness in teaching?**

## Boldness in Purpose: Creating Your Own Purpose Statement

*When you turn to the right or when you turn to the left,  
your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*

Isaiah 30:21

We subscribe to this purpose statement, a living document to empower us as participants in Women of the ELCA. But what about a personal statement of purpose? Grounded in God, how can we boldly reveal ourselves as women of faith? As individuals, how are we committed to living into our faith? How can we create our own purpose statement?

A personal purpose statement helps us make decisions and boldly step forward in faith. It brings and binds what is true for our lives, and cuts away what is inauthentic. Once created, we can come back to our personal purpose statement daily, praying it into our lives and living it out.

How we see ourselves is clearly and plainly reflected in everything we say or do—where we work, play, go to school, or go to church; with our families and friends; and how we serve our communities. It affects who we are and who we will become.

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. . . . For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. . . . My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

Psalm 139:1–3, 13, 15

### Questions to reflect upon as you create your purpose statement:

*What gives my life meaning? What do I want to be in my life?*

*When I look at my life and work, what activities do I consider of greatest worth?*

*God guides our way and gives us the tools to carry out the tasks God gives us. What is a task God has given me? Did/do I trust God to carry it out?*

*What could I do if I were 10 times bolder?*

*As a result of my life, at least one thing has changed or shifted in the world. What is it (are they)?*

### Step forward boldly now and write down your purpose statement:

*(Look back at your “I Am She” chart on page 10 to get you started.)*

### Examples of beginning phrases:

I am she, the one who is . . .

I am she, who does . . .

I am she, who will . . .

# Boldness of Revelation

An “I Am She” Commissioning Service Outline

## Gathering Song or Poem

### Greeting

**Leader:** As the angel said to Mary, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

**All:** Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word. Blessed be our God above all things. Amen.

**Leader:** Let us pray,

**All:** May we speak your word with all confidence, while you extend your holy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. (Acts 4:29)

**Leader:** God of the church, empower your people throughout the world to share the Gospel with boldness that your church may grow in faith. Help us to be instruments of peace and justice in our community and our world with the courage to be your witnesses in the world. Give us boldness to speak your word when boldness is needed. Give us compassionate hearts and listening ears in those places where your compassion and presence are needed. Give us joyful hearts that others may see the joy of knowing you in our lives and on our faces. All these things, we boldly ask in Jesus’ name.

**All:** Amen.

## Music or Poem

## A Litany of Thanks for Bold Women

**Leader:** Lord our God, we give thanks today for the witness of bold women. From the earliest times until today and on into the future, bold women show all of us how to live as God’s beloved children in God’s beloved creation, carrying out our baptismal call to work for justice and peace for all God’s creatures.

**Leader:** For Eve, mother of us all, disobedient yet beloved, we say:

**All:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For Miriam, who danced beside the Red Sea, we say:

**Young women:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For Mary, mother of Jesus, who pondered the angel’s words in her heart, we say:

**Mothers:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For Mary Magdalene, first to hear the voice of the Risen Christ, we say:

**Single women:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For Naomi, who rejoiced in her grandson Obed, we say:

**Grandmothers:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For the Syro-Phoenician woman, bold enough to challenge Jesus himself for her child’s sake:

**Daughters:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For Mary and Martha of Bethany, who served the Lord together in their different ways, we say:

**Sisters:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For the persistent widow, who would not rest until she won justice, we say:

**Widows:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** For Katharine von Bora Luther, who ran to embrace change in her world, we say:

**Married women:** Thank you, Lord!

**Leader:** There have been bold women all around us on our way, if only we look for them. For whom do we thank the Lord today? Name her aloud and let us thank God for her witness. (Members of the assembly may speak the names of other bold women aloud, briefly describing her witness. After each one, the group responds:)

**All:** Thank you, Lord!

(When the group is done naming bold women, the leader concludes:)

**Leader:** For the witness of all bold women, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Lord our God, we thank you and we praise you. Lord our God, let their boldness flourish in our own hearts as we live out our baptismal call to serve you and our neighbor, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength.

**All:** Thank you, Lord! Amen!

## Readings

Choose scripture passages of bold biblical women, for example:

- 1) Esther 7:1–10
- 2) Matthew 26:6–13
- 3) Luke 1:50–53

- 1) *Queen Esther spoke out for her people when they were threatened by an unjust law set to kill the Jews. Risking death, Esther went before the king to protest the law and save the uncle who had raised her, as well as her entire people.*
- 2) *The woman who anointed Jesus defied custom and culture and anointed Jesus for his burial. While others criticized her, Jesus held her up as a bold model stepping forward to care for him in his time of need. This unnamed woman has held a place in history because of her bold ways.*
- 3) *Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was a bold advocate for the voiceless. Mary is an example of serving with bold acceptance that the world needs a balance and a voice to call out injustice. When Mary visited Elizabeth during her pregnancy she foretold the work the Lord would do to rebalance the injustices in the world.*

## Commentary or Sermon

## Song, Poem, or Liturgical Dance

## Commissioning

**Leader:** Blessed is she who believes that there is fulfillment in the word of the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

**Leader:** Sisters in Christ, through your baptism you were called to lives of bold service as part of the priesthood we all share in Christ Jesus.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

## I Am She Litany

**Leader:** Jesus boldly revealed himself to the woman at the well, saying, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.” May your voices also speak boldly today.

**Voice 1:** For the one who stands before others asking for her voice to be heard,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 2:** For the one who preaches with such power she is believed not to be a woman,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 3:** For the one who cares for the wellbeing of others,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 1:** For the one who witnesses to her faith in the face of judgment,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 2:** For the one who advocates for others at the risk of her own peril,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 3:** For the one who shows calmness in the midst of negotiation,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 1:** For the one who challenges boldly yet quietly,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 2:** For the one who does not grow weary in encouraging others to do what is just,

**All:** I am she.

**Voice 3:** For the one who today has been boldly self-revealing just as Jesus revealed himself,

**All:** I am she.

**Leader:** Let us all now boldly speak our purpose statements together and aloud.

**(All respond by reading their personal statements at the same time or separately.)**

**Leader:** For all of us here today who boldly proclaim to live out our purpose,

**All:** I am she!

**Leader:** Blessed is she who believes and takes action on the word of the Lord. May God grant you the strength and courage to act boldly on your faith in Jesus Christ.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

## Closing Prayer and Blessing

**Leader:** Let us pray,

**All:** God of joy and redemption, power, and purpose, as we are given new life in the power of your Holy Spirit, may we boldly proclaim your good news in our words and deeds, rejoicing always in your presence; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

## Song or Music

### Sending

**Leader:** Do not lack in zeal, be ardent in the spirit, serve the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God. And we will.

**The songs below are suggested for use during the commissioning service. Feel free to use other songs, poems, or readings that are meaningful and applicable.**

*ELW: Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

*LBW: Lutheran Book of Worship*

*WB: Worship Boldly*

*WP: Worship & Praise*

*WOV: With One Voice*

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying ( <i>WB</i> 119 or <i>ELW</i> 752)	Prayer
Be Bold, Be Strong ( <i>WP</i> 15)	Advocacy
Lord, Let my Heart Be Good Soil ( <i>WOV</i> 713 & <i>ELW</i> 512)	Teaching
Make Me a Servant ( <i>W&amp;P</i> 96)	Caring
Where Restless Crowds Are Thronging ( <i>LBW</i> 430 & <i>ELW</i> 719)	Advocacy
What a Friend We Have in Jesus ( <i>LBW</i> 439 & <i>ELW</i> 742)	Prayer
The Church of Christ, in Every Age ( <i>LBW</i> 433 & <i>ELW</i> 729)	Advocacy
Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast ( <i>LBW</i> 234 & <i>ELW</i> 516)	Teaching
The Church's One Foundation ( <i>LBW</i> 369 & <i>ELW</i> 654)	Teaching
Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us ( <i>LBW</i> 481 & <i>ELW</i> 789)	Caring
Ubi caritas et amor ( <i>WB</i> 131 & <i>ELW</i> 642)	Caring
Remember and Rejoice ( <i>ELW</i> 454)	Prayer
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love ( <i>WOV</i> 765 & <i>ELW</i> 708)	Caring
In Christ Called to Baptize ( <i>WB</i> 114 & <i>ELW</i> 575)	Teaching
Canticle of the Turning ( <i>WB</i> 90 & <i>ELW</i> 723)	Advocacy

## Other Bold Advocates

### Esther

This queen spoke out for her people who were threatened by an unjust law set to kill the Jews. Her story is told in the book of Esther. Risking death, Esther went before the king to protest the law and save the uncle who raised her as well as her entire people. Esther had gained the favor of the king; he granted her wish and simultaneously destroyed the instigator of the law. Her bold commitment to her people saved them.

### Rosa Parks

This bold woman spoke out by sitting down. Her taking a seat empowered a nation to begin to change its unhealthy racist ways. In 1955, Rosa Parks (born Rosa Macauley) was an African-American seamstress living in Montgomery, Alabama—a strictly segregated community. Parks refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white man, and she was arrested and fined. This led to a bus boycott by African Americans, led by Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and caused a national sensation that eventually led to widespread desegregation in the United States and to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Ms. Parks became a national icon of civil rights and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton in 1996.

### Dorothy Day

Founder of the Catholic Worker movement (1933), a journalist, and a social activist who helped the poor and disadvantaged and espoused nonviolence, Dorothy Day stood up for women's rights.

In 1917 she was arrested while protesting the abuse of women, was sent to a workhouse, responded with a hunger strike, and was freed by presidential order. While she did not identify alignment with any

political party, throughout her life she held to her conviction that the social order was unjust. Dorothy Day died in 1980 a devout Catholic and champion advocate of the poor.

She wrote: “What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And to a certain extent, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, of the poor, of the destitute—the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words—we can to a certain extent change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world.”

### Catherine of Siena

The youngest of 24 children, Catherine began having visions and mystical experiences at age seven. She dedicated her life to God, vowing perpetual virginity and poverty. In a time of fasting and praying, Jesus came to meet her daily; and among other gifts, he taught her to read.

The pivotal event in Catherine's life came three years into her life of solitude and ascetic practices. Jesus stood in the doorway of her room, but instead of entering as she invited, he told her, “You must come out here now.” She did and began serving others in Siena, visiting prisons and nursing plague victims.

Catherine actively pursued the work of making peace among the rival noble families of Italy and within the church, fractured by the pope's move to France. In 1376, Catherine and her followers (whom she called her “family”) walked to France to persuade Pope Gregory XI to return the papacy to Italy.

## Other Bold Women Who Care

### Martha

The sister of Mary and Lazurus was concerned about hospitality and making her guests welcome. She often gets the short end of the stick as one who does not want to learn from Jesus, but she is a symbol of caring for others. She boldly asserted her desire to provide comfort and care to her guests.

### Ruth

*Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before."*

Ruth 2:11

Ruth bravely faced the unfamiliar in order to help those closest to her, choosing to stay as a faithful and caring companion to her mother-in-law rather than go home to her own land.

### Mother Teresa

*"By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus."*

Mother Teresa

She left her home and family at the age of 18 to join the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She became a sister and later a missionary, and would spend her entire life boldly caring for others. She opened Missionaries of Charity homes throughout the world, including India, Cuba, Albania, and the former Soviet Union.

### Kate Nolan

Kate Nolan was one of 17 U.S. Army nurses who made it safely to land in June 1944 after jumping from their landing craft at Normandy's Utah Beach in WWII. She traveled as an Army combat nurse during the war, setting up mobile field hospitals and caring for Allied and German soldiers as well as concentration camp survivors.

### Elizabeth Fedde

Born on December 25, 1850, near Flekkefjord, Norway, Elizabeth Fedde was trained as a deaconess at the Lovisenberg Deaconess House under the supervision of Mother Katinka Guldberg. On her 32nd birthday, Sister Elizabeth received a letter from her brother-in-law Gabriel Fedde, challenging her to set up a ministry in New York City for Norwegian sailors there. She accepted his challenge and arrived in the United States on April 9, 1883. Sister Elizabeth established her work just 10 days after arriving in the United States with the founding of the Norwegian Relief Society.

In 1885, Fedde opened a deaconess house for the training of other women to help in her ministry. Originally, the house consisted of a nine-bed hospital that ultimately became Lutheran Medical Center in New York. She left New York at the request of Lutherans in Minnesota to come and minister to them. In 1888 she established the Lutheran Deaconess Home and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church and helped plan a third hospital in Chicago.

Sister Elizabeth returned to Norway in November 1895 to Ola Sletteb, a suitor whom she had left to conduct her missionary work. The two were married shortly after her return. Elizabeth died on February 25, 1921, and is commemorated on that date by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

## Other Bold Teachers

### Mary of Bethany

Martha and Lazurus' sister Mary chose the "better part," sitting and learning from Jesus. She boldly defied what was expected of first-century women, and instead of serving took the role of student of the traveling messiah. Jesus acknowledged learning as important and set Mary as a role model, for not just women but for men as well. In her bold sitting, she became a bold teacher about learning for our Lord, Jesus.

### Mary Magdalene

As evangelist to the apostles, Mary Magdalene receives little acknowledgement. But Scripture asserts her as one who saw, knew, and believed in Jesus. She knew his voice when he called her name. Jesus then gave Mary the charge of boldly telling the others what she had seen, and of his resurrection. Mary became the apostle to the apostles and the first evangelist of the Good News.

### Harriet Livermore

Harriet Livermore was a woman evangelist and preacher in early 19th-century America. Insisting that God had called her to preach the Gospel, she boldly requested and was granted, by the Speaker of the House, the right to preach in front of Congress in 1827. She was one of many bold women preachers who defended their right to the pulpit long before today's arguments over the ordination of women began.

### Alice Fong Yu

Alice Fong Yu was born in California in 1905. In 1922, she attempted to apply to the San Francisco Normal Teachers' College but was discouraged from attending, advised that discrimination would prevent her from finding a teaching job. Eventually she was admitted and became the first Chinese American teacher in the San Francisco School District.

## A Short List of Some Bold Women of the Bible

Bold and Faithful Women	Biblical text	Bold and Faithful Women	Biblical text
Sarah	Genesis 17:15–21	Mary, Jesus' mother	Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–21
Hagar	Genesis 16:7–15		Acts 1:12–14
Rebekah	Genesis 27:13–17	Anna	Luke 2:36–38
Puah & Shiphrah	Exodus 1:15–22	“Sinner” Woman	Luke 7:36–50
Jochebed (Moses' mother)	Exodus 2:1–10	Bent-over woman	Luke 13:10–17
Miriam	Exodus 15:20–22	Poor Widow	Luke 21:1–4
Noah and her sisters	Numbers 26:33, 27:1–8	Samaritan Woman	John 4: 1–42
Rahab	Joshua 2:4–6; 6:17–25	Mary and Martha	John 11:1–44
Deborah	Judges 4–5	Mary Magdalene	John 20:1–18
Ruth & Naomi	Ruth 1–4	Dorcas	Acts 9:36–42
Hannah	1 Samuel 1:24— 3:21	Rhoda	Acts 12:12–17
Abigail	1 Samuel 25:1–42	Lydia	Acts 16:12–15, 40
Bathesheba	2 Samuel 11:1— 12:25	Philip's daughters	Acts 21:8–9
A Wise Woman	2 Samuel 20:15–22	Phoebe	Romans 16:1–2
Well-to-do Woman	2 Kings 4:8–37	Euodia and Syntyche	Philippians 4:2–3
Queen Vashti	Esther 1	Eunice and Lois	2 Timothy 1:3–7
Esther	Esther 4–5 & 7		
Unnamed Woman	Matthew 9:20–22		
Canaanite Woman	Matthew 15:21–28		
Bleeding Woman	Mark 5:21–34		
Mary Magdalene, Mary and Salome	Mark 16:1–11		
Elizabeth	Luke 1:5–25, 39–45, 57–66		

## Resources for Acting Boldly

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This 60- or 90-minute program helps women see themselves as part of a global community in which all can play leadership roles. The program includes group activities, discussion questions, and a closing litany.

#### Called to Be Global Sisters: Seeing Each Other with New Eyes

All of us benefit when we increase our understanding of women from other cultures. This one-hour program includes role plays and probing discussion questions.

#### Called to Be Political: But I Don't Want to Be Political!

This resource offers a fascinating glimpse into the teachings of Martin Luther on the role of Christians in politics and explores how those teachings still speak to us today. A two-hour program.

#### Called to Be Women in Mission: Exploring New Opportunities

This program provides a biblical foundation for understanding God's call to be women in mission—in our homes, congregations, communities, and the world. A 90-minute program.

#### Called to Deal with Difficult Issues: A Challenging Ministry

Having a process for thinking theologically is invaluable as we face difficult issues in our daily lives. Program participants see this process applied to a sample issue and then walk through the process with an issue of their own choosing. Three one-hour sessions.

#### Called to Ethical Decision Making: No Easy Answers

This resource explores the Lutheran ethical approach and the complexities involved in ethical decision making and offers participants practical experience in ethical deliberation. A two-hour workshop.

#### Called to Love as God Loves—Unconditionally!

This program—adapted from the “Embracing Self and Others” leadership events—focuses on God's call to love ourselves, to love our neighbors, and to support one another as we identify and use our diverse gifts and skills. Reflection on Scripture is an integral part of the three one-hour sessions.

**Called to Obey God: It's Not Easy Being Jonah**

This Bible study explores the relevance of Jonah's story in our lives and helps us see how we can be partners with God in carrying out God's vision for the whole of creation. Six 30-minute sessions.

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